

## PART 611-1: INTRODUCTION

The Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, in cooperation with other agencies, prepares a long-range (twenty-year) transportation plan that is part of the State Guide Plan. The last ground transportation plan was adopted in 1998, for the year 2020. In 2001, a limited update of the 2020 plan was completed (see section 1-4).

### 1-1 ORGANIZATION FOR TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The State Planning Council, the Program's policy body, serves to coordinate planning and development activities in the state. The Council adopts all statements of goals and policies and all elements of the State Guide Plan. With specific reference to transportation planning, the Council is the policy body for continuing transportation planning (the "Metropolitan Planning Organization" required by federal law).

The Council has a permanent advisory committee, the Technical Committee, and a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC's purposes are to encourage public involvement in the transportation planning process and to develop, with the staff, the transportation planning documents that are the responsibility of the Council.

The planning staff, as part of a state planning agency, can integrate transportation with other planning issues. The staff works cooperatively with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), other state agencies, officials in 39 cities and towns and one Indian tribe, neighboring states, multi-state groups, and federal agencies.

### 1-2 SCOPE OF THE PLAN

This plan considers ground transportation systems for both people and goods, and connections to air and water travel. It encompasses all modes of ground transportation: highway, bus, rail, paratransit, bicycle, pedestrian, and intermodal facilities.

Other State Guide Plan elements deal with airports, water transportation, freight rail, and greenways.

### 1-3 PURPOSES OF THE PLAN

The transportation plan has several purposes.

- It sets state policy, to guide public and private decisions involving transportation.
- As a State Guide Plan element, it is a basis for measuring consistency of local comprehensive plans and other plans, programs, and projects with state policies.
- It provides a long-range framework for advancing projects in two-year Transportation Improvement Programs.



## 1-4 PLAN UPDATE

A limited update of the plan was completed in 2001. This update was based upon the following inputs:

- four regional public listening sessions jointly held by the Statewide Planning Program, RI Department of Transportation, and RI Public Transit Authority to allow for public discussion of the vision and policies of the current plan, and of transportation issues of concern to citizens and local officials within various regions of the state. Supplementing the discussions, a written survey, distributed at the forums and mailed to community officials, also elicited comment on the plan's vision, goals and policies, and other matters,
- an assessment by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) of four key aspects of the state's transportation system:
  - intermodalism;
  - the equity of the distribution of of the transportation system's benefits and burdens;
  - the potential for using major travel corridors as a framework for assessing and addressing future transportation needs within the state; and
  - the interaction of land use and transportation.

The TAC formed *ad hoc* subcommittees to study and to conduct public forums on each issue, at which expert and citizen input was obtained,

- an intensive pilot study conducted for the Statewide Planning Program by The Providence Plan, a non-profit organization, to better include and address the transportation needs of low income, minority, elderly, disabled, and other transportation-disadvantaged groups within the planning process. This effort included twelve focus groups, arranged through community-based organizations, designed to reach out to and engage disadvantaged populations of the state's largest and poorest urban city, Providence,
- initial recommendations from an interagency process convened by the Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee of the State Highway Safety Advisory Committee designed to investigate pedestrian safety and related concerns and recommend measures to improve conditions for safe pedestrian travel. As part of this effort the group organized Rhode Island's first *Walkable Communities Conference*, which assembled nearly 200 state and local officials, and interested citizens to share information and devise steps needed to make Rhode Island communities more "walkable". In concert with this effort, the RI Department of Transportation drafted a RI Pedestrian Safety Plan, which was also used as a source for the plan update,
- initial results from the 2000 Census, and other available data, and
- an assessment of the conformity of the plan's recommendations with the State Air Quality Implementation Plan (SIP).

These inputs were used by the Transportation Advisory Committee and staff to prepare a draft update to the plan that was recommended to the State Planning Council on June 14, 2001. Following review by the Council, and public hearings held on July 12, 2001, the draft plan was approved by the Council on August 9, 2001.

## **1-5 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIC GOALS**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Strategic Plan for the 2000-2005 period sets forth the overall direction, vision, and mission of the Department. The Strategic Plan provides a mission statement to describe the underlying purpose for Departmental activities, and identifies five strategic goals that capture the most important outcomes influenced by the Department's programs:

**VISION** "A visionary and vigilant Department of Transportation leading the way to transportation excellence and innovation in the 21st Century."

**MISSION** "Serve the United States by ensuring a safe transportation system that furthers our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people."

### **STRATEGIC GOALS:**

**Safety** - Promote the public health and safety by working toward the elimination of transportation-related deaths and injuries.

**Mobility** - Shape an accessible, affordable, reliable transportation system for all people, goods, and regions.

**Economic Growth** – Support a transportation system that sustains America's economic growth.

**Human and Natural Environment** - Protect and enhance communities and the natural environment affected by transportation.

**National Security** - Ensure the security of the transportation system for the movement of people and goods, and support the National Security Strategy.

### **Federal Performance Objectives**

To assess implementation success of the USDOT Strategic Plan, the agency annually prepares a Performance Plan establishing goals and measurable performance objectives in key areas supporting the Strategic Plan's goals. A number of the objectives of the Department's FY 2002 performance plan have relevance to Rhode Island's Ground Transportation Plan, and are included below, for reference:

#### **Highway Safety**

- Reduce highway fatalities from 1.6 per 100 million vehicle-miles of travel (VMT) to 1.4

## **Mobility**

- Increase from 93.8% (FY 2000) to 95% the percentage of total miles of the National Highway System maintained in “acceptable ride quality” condition.
- Reduce, from 21.5 (FY 2000) to 21, the percentage of bridges on the National Highway System that are rated as “deficient”.
- Hold the growth in hours of extra travel time due to traffic congestion to 34 hours annually, compared to 32 hours (FY 1999).
- Increase from 52 (FY 2000) to 61, the number of metropolitan areas with integrated Intelligent Transportation Systems infrastructure.

## **Economic Growth**

- Increase the number of students graduating with transportation-related advanced degrees from universities receiving DOT funding to 1,216 in 2002
- Increase the share of the total dollar value of DOT direct contracts that are awarded to women-owned businesses from 4.5 percent (FY 2000) to 5.1%.
- Maintain the share of the total dollar value of DOT direct contracts that are awarded to small disadvantaged businesses at or above 14.5 percent

## **Human and Natural Environment**

- Increase the percent of the urban population living within 1/4 mile of a transit stop with service frequency of 15 minutes or less (non-rush hour) from 11.54 (2000) to 11.78.
- Increase passenger-miles traveled by transit from 45.3 billion (FY2000) to 47.5 billion.
- Limit mobile source emissions from on-road motor vehicles to 61.1 million tons in FY 2002 (FY 2000 = 59.7 million tons).

## **National Security**

- Reduce transportation-related petroleum consumption from 2.828 (2000 est.) quadrillion BTUs per trillion dollars of Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 2.72.

Rhode Island should target the development of performance objectives and criteria for the state's transportation system that can be incorporated into future updates of this plan, used in the state budgetary process, and reflected in studies of individual corridors and projects. Performance criteria developed should relate to the major strategic goals of this plan, be objective, quantifiable, and measurable. The process of development of such criteria should include all major transportation system stakeholders, including the public.